

Press Release

From the Office of
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 27, 2010



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Moonridge Animal Park in Big Bear Valley Finds New Home

Alpine zoo land purchase funded primarily by Prop. 40 grant funds

SAN BERNARDINO, CA – The Moonridge Animal Park will soon relocate from its existing location to a larger site at the north end of the Bear Mountain Golf Course as a result of a decision by the Board of Supervisors at the April 27 board meeting. The new site will more than quadruple the size of the existing facility.

Supervisor Neil Derry spearheaded the effort to expend over \$1.5 million in Prop. 40 funding that was nearing a critical deadline.

“For more than a decade the county has been working to relocate this treasured asset,” Supervisor Derry stated. **“Finishing this project was a top priority of mine since we were at risk of losing state funds if we did not act quickly.”**

Numerous properties throughout the Big Bear Valley were considered for site selection. After weighing the variables and options, the chosen site was the location preferred by the curator and Friends of Moonridge Zoo, a non-profit organization that works to fulfill the mission statement of the zoo.

The funding for the purchase of the new site comes from \$1,508,000 in Prop. 40 grant funds, and \$554,500 in previously dedicated county funds. The total cost to acquire the new site for San Bernardino County’s only zoo is \$2,062,500.

The zoo is operated by the Big Bear Valley Recreation and Park District. The District is part of the San Bernardino County Office of Special Districts and receives funding for the facility through property tax revenues. Additional funding of the zoo comes from gate admission, program fees, and the fundraising activities of the Friends of Moonridge Zoo.

The current zoo property is leased on an annual basis and a new site for the Moonridge Animal Park has been sought for the past several years. The new site provides excellent access, visibility, and tremendous growth potential to enhance both the living conditions for the animals and the visitor experience.

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The Moonridge Animal Park is currently located on a leased 2.5-acre site in the Moonridge area of Big Bear Valley, across from the Big Bear Mountain Ski Resort, and adjacent to a golf course and residential area.

Founded in 1959, San Bernardino County's only zoo and one of only two alpine zoos in the nation, it provides for the care, rehabilitation, and when possible, the release of injured, orphaned, or confiscated animals back into the wild. There are approximately 127 animals, representing 83 different species of alpine and sub-alpine species native to California presently living at the zoo.

The zoo currently offers hundreds of educational programs for school children, youth organizations, families, and visitors from around the world. Educational programs are provided both on-site and off-site. Primarily a zoological facility, Moonridge Animal Park is also a fully licensed, designated care and rehabilitation facility for injured or confiscated animals.

Supervisor Derry said that the ultimate goal is for the Big Bear Zoo to become totally self-sufficient through gate revenue and private donations. **“This is the first step toward reaching that goal and establishing the zoo as a regional, if not national, must see destination,”** Supervisor Derry said.